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AND GERMAN UNIFICATION**

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The Two Plus Four Agreement regulating the external aspects of German unification, signed on September 12, 1990, closed an important chapter in European politics and in Moscow's policy toward Germany.¹ Since the mid-1950s (if not earlier) Soviet policy in Europe had been aimed at maintaining the division of Germany and stabilizing the GDR. Indeed, the existence of two German sovereign states was the cornerstone of Moscow's European policy. Thus, the unification of Germany shattered the foundations of Moscow's postwar policy in Europe.

What accounts for this historic change? Did Gorbachev consider unification "a possible, and for the Soviet Union, acceptable consequence of his policy conceptions," as some analysts have argued?² Or was unification an unintended by-product of his policy? What factors were most influential in shaping Gorbachev's policy toward Germany? What are the prospects for Russian-German relations in the wake of unification?

This essay examines the evolution of Gorbachev's policy on the German question. It argues that Gorbachev did not have a "grand design" for

solving the German question. While he desired an improvement in bilateral relations with Bonn, he did not consciously seek or promote German unification. On the contrary, he saw the continued existence of two independent German states as a key element of a new security order in Europe. The crisis in the GDR in the fall of 1989, however, dramatically changed Soviet calculations and forced a reassessment of Moscow's policy. Precisely because he had no clear-cut strategy for resolving the German question, Gorbachev was forced to adapt to the rapidly changing situation after the fall of the Berlin Wall in an ad hoc, improvised manner, and finally to accept unification largely on Western terms.

The Evolution of Gorbachev's German Policy

In retrospect, it is possible to identify three distinct phases in Gorbachev's approach to the German issue.

1 For the text of the treaty, see *Bulletin des Presse-und Informationsamtes der Bundesregierung* (hereinafter cited as *Bulletin*), No. 109 (September 14, 1990), pp. 1153-56. The Russian text was published in *Izvestiya*, September 13, 1990. For a useful compendium of the most relevant documents related to German unification in English, see Adam Daniel Rotfeld and Walther Stütze (eds.), *Germany and Europe in Transition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

2 Hannes Adomeit, "Gorbachev and Unification: Revision of Thinking, Realignment of Power," *Problems of Communism* (July-August 1990), p. 7.



**Phase One: Reconciliation and Rapprochement
(March 1985-October 1988)**

This period began with Gorbachev's assumption of power and ended with Kohl's trip to Moscow in October 1988. During this phase Gorbachev gradually sought to reverse Gromyko's policy of trying to isolate and punish the Federal Republic for its willingness to accept the deployment of U.S. medium-range missiles. The shift away from the "Gromyko line" toward a more conciliatory policy did not manifest itself immediately. During the first year and a half after Gorbachev assumed power, West Germany continued to be the subject of constant vituperation for its "revanchist" policy.³ Gorbachev made highly publicized visits to Paris and London in 1985 and 1986 but conspicuously bypassed Bonn.

By 1986, however, the Soviet attitude showed signs of moderating. The campaign against German "revanchism," initiated in the spring of 1984, gradually began to abate. During Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher's visit to Moscow in July 1986, Gorbachev offered to open a "new page" in relations; a number of important bilateral agreements were initiated or signed, including a long-delayed framework agreement on scientific and technological cooperation.

Genscher's visit was followed by other small but important signs that the Soviet attitude toward West Germany was softening: a visible increase in the number of high-level visits, an increase in the number of ethnic Germans allowed to emigrate to West Germany,⁴ and a more cooperative attitude toward Berlin.⁴ These changes contributed to an improvement in relations and paved the way for Chancellor Helmut Kohl's visit to Moscow in October 1988.

Kohl's visit essentially ended the quarantine that had been imposed on West Germany in the aftermath of the Soviet walkout from INF talks. During the visit, six new governmental agreements were signed in areas ranging from environmental protection to nuclear and maritime safety. In addition, more than thirty new contracts with West German firms were signed, including a major new deal for the sale of a high-temperature nuclear reactor.

The warmer tone evident during Kohl's visit, however, did not imply a shift in the Soviet approach to German unification. During the visit, Gorbachev emphasized that Germany's division was the result of a specific historical development and he warned that any attempt to change the situation or pursue "unrealistic policies would be "an unpredictable and even dangerous business."⁵

**Phase Two: Conceptual Adjustment
(October 1988-January 1990)**

The second phase of Gorbachev's policy began in the wake of the Kohl visit and ended with Gorbachev's acquiescence to German unification during East German Prime Minister Hans Modrow's visit to Moscow in January 1990. Officially, Moscow continued to insist that any change in Europe had to be based on the territorial "realities" that had emerged after World War II, including the preservation of two independent German states. At the same time, there were signs that Moscow might be rethinking aspects of its German policy as part of its general approach to Europe as a whole.

One sign that Moscow might be rethinking its approach to the German question came during the visit of West German President Richard Von Weizsäcker to Moscow in July 1987. In response to Von Weizsäcker's insistence on the "unity of the German nation," Gorbachev stressed that there were two Germanies with two different political and economic systems. What would happen in one hundred years, he said, "would be left to history to decide."⁶ While his response did not substantially depart from the well-established Soviet insistence on the continued existence of two German states, it was less categorical than previous Soviet statements and left open the possibility of change at some time in the (distant) future.

Behind the scenes, moreover, some analysts began to question whether the division of Germany served Soviet interests and to call for a new approach to the German problem. A memorandum prepared in 1988 for Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Dashichev, Deputy Head of the Institute for the Study of the World Socialist Systems and a consultant to the Foreign Ministry, put for-

3 For details, see Fred Oldenburg, "Des Verhältnis Moskau-Bonn unter Gorbatschow," *Osteuropa* (August-September 1986), pp. 774-86.

4 For details, see F. Stephen Larrabee, "Soviet Policy Toward Germany: New Thinking and Old Realities," *Washington Quarterly* (Fall 1989), pp. 43-44.

5 For Gorbachev's speech, see *Izvestiya*, October 16, 1988.

6 See *Pravda*, July 8, 1987. Gorbachev's remarks are repeated almost verbatim in his book, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), p. 200.

ward a two-stage plan to overcome the division of Germany. The first stage envisaged a liberalization of the GDR and closer contact between the two German states. This would be followed by a second stage involving the "formation of a voluntary confederation of the two German states."⁷ However, even the advocates of more radical change, such as Dashichev, did not envisage unification in the near future. Rather they called for a reform of the GDR and a rapprochement between the two states as part of a gradual transformation of the bloc system into pan-European structures.

The strongest indication that some rethinking was occurring came during Gorbachev's visit to Bonn in June 1989. At West German insistence, the Joint Declaration issued at the end of the visit explicitly noted the "right of all peoples and states" to freely determine their destiny and "the respect for the rights of peoples to self-determination."⁸ By accepting this language, Moscow implicitly acknowledged that the Germans had the right to self-determination—and unity.⁹

This does not mean, however, that Gorbachev was ready to accept or endorse German unification. On the contrary, he continued to stress the "realities" of the existence of two German states, noting that "time could take care of the rest."¹⁰ In short, Gorbachev was willing to concede that in principle the Germans, like other people, had a right to self-determination. Nevertheless, he continued to see any change in the German question as a *long-term process* which would come about as a result of a *gradual* dissolution of both blocs and transformation of the overall security situation in Europe.¹¹

The intensification of the crisis in the GDR in the autumn of 1989, however, forced the Soviet leadership to gradually modify its policy.¹² The Soviets had been concerned about the deterioration of the situation in the GDR for some time and feared that Honecker's continued resistance to reform might lead to a popular explosion.¹³ However, they did not wish to directly interfere in East German affairs nor take any actions that might destabilize the GDR.

During Gorbachev's visit to East Berlin on October 6-7 for the 40th anniversary celebrations of the founding of the GDR, the Soviet leader sought to gently nudge Honecker to introduce more far-reaching reforms. While stressing that policy toward the GDR was made in Berlin not Moscow, he also noted that "life punishes those who come too late." This was a clear signal that Honecker should undertake reform in order to prevent an intensification of the crisis. Privately, moreover, Gorbachev warned the East German leadership that if unrest broke out, Soviet troops would remain in their barracks.¹⁴

The Soviet unwillingness to intervene militarily dramatically changed the dynamics of the crisis. In the past the East German leadership had felt confident that it could count on Soviet "fraternal assistance"—as in 1953—in case it faced serious popular unrest. In East Berlin, however, Gorbachev made clear that the rules of the game had changed and that the East German leadership could not count on Soviet help if unrest broke out. This, in effect, pulled the rug out from under Honecker and paved the way for his overthrow—and the acceleration of the crisis.

7 See the memorandum by Dashichev in *Der Spiegel*, 6/1990, pp. 142-58. The memorandum was originally written in 1988. Dashichev's influence, however, has been vastly overrated, especially in Germany. Dashichev was somewhat an intellectual gadfly and his views had little direct impact on Soviet policy.

8 For the text of the Joint Declaration, see *Pravda*, June 14, 1989. There was also another small sign that Moscow was rethinking its position on the German question. The declaration refers to the FRG as "Federativnaya Respublika Germaniya" rather than "Germanii." This construction implies that there was one single Germany (Germaniya) with a federal structure, rather than two Germanies, with only one having a federal structure. See Hannes Adomeit, "Gorbachev and German Unification: Revision of Thinking, Realignment of Power," pp. 5-6.

9 The communiqué was regarded by the East German leadership as a departure from Moscow's traditional approach to the German issue and a "betrayal" of the GDR. See Jens Kaiser, "Zwischen angestrebter Eigenständigkeit und traditioneller Unterordnung," *Deutschland Archiv* (May 1991), pp. 478-95, especially pp. 487-94.

10 *Pravda*, June 16, 1989. For a detailed discussion of the Gorbachev visit, see Fred Oldenburg, "Vier Tage in Juni—Gorbatschow in Bonn," *Osteuropa* (11/12/1989), pp. 981-94.

11 For instance, at a joint press conference with French President François Mitterand in early July, Gorbachev termed the idea of German unification unrealistic, noting that Germany's division was the result of the Second World War and "one does not reverse history just for hope's sake" (*Pravda*, July 6, 1989).

12 A detailed analysis of the crisis in the GDR is beyond the scope of this essay. For a comprehensive discussion, see Elizabeth Pond, "A Wall Destroyed: The Dynamics of Unification in the GDR," *International Security* (Fall 1990), pp. 35-66. For an insightful account by an influential West German insider, see Horst Teltschik, *329 Tage* (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1991). Teltschik was chief foreign policy advisor to Chancellor Kohl and played an important role in the formulation of the Kohl government's policy toward unification.

13 See the memorandum by Valentin Falin, head of the International Department of the Central Committee and one of Moscow's top German specialists, *Die Welt*, September 15, 1989. In the memorandum, a copy of which was obtained by West German Intelligence, Falin reportedly expressed concern about growing public dissatisfaction and the possibility of mass demonstrations that could prove difficult to control. He also pointed to the sense of vacillation and drift within the East German leadership, which he said was unable to handle the growing crisis.

14 See Craig Whitney, "German Upheaval Reviewed," *International Herald Tribune*, December 19, 1989. Also Fred Oldenburg, "Sowjetische Deutschland-Politik nach der October Revolution in der DDR," *Deutschland Archiv* (January 1990), p. 70.

In advocating more far-reaching reform, Gorbachev clearly did not intend to precipitate the collapse of the GDR. Rather, he hoped to encourage the removal of Honecker and the installation of a more reform-oriented leader who would be more flexible but could still be relied upon to maintain firm control of the reform process. Wittingly or not, Gorbachev's actions contributed to the collapse of the GDR and the growth of pressure for unification. Once it was clear that the Soviets would not intervene militarily, the demands for reform took on a momentum of their own, sweeping from power first Honecker, then his successor Egon Krenz, and finally the whole Socialist Unity Party (SED).

The rapidity of the collapse of the GDR caught the Soviet leadership by surprise. While Gorbachev was willing to endorse the general principle of self-determination, he was not initially prepared to accept unification. In his public remarks after the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, he continued to emphasize the "inviolability of borders" and the "reality" of the existence of two German states, which he said had to be respected.¹⁵ The Soviets also were strongly critical of Kohl's 10-point plan, announced on November 28, which, among other things, called for the creation of "confederal structures" between the two German states.¹⁶ During Foreign Minister Genscher's visit to Moscow in early December, Gorbachev and Shevardnadze were highly critical of West German policy and rejected Kohl's 10-point plan as a "diktat."¹⁷

Similarly, in his speech to the European Parliament in Brussels on December 19, 1990, Shevardnadze supported the principle of self-determination, but quickly qualified this by saying that self-determination could not infringe upon the territorial and political status quo. "East Germany is our strategic ally," he said. "It is necessary to proceed on this basis of postwar realities, namely the existence of two sovereign German states, members of the United Nations." A retreat from this, he

warned, was "fraught with dangerous destabilization." He also raised a number of specific questions which he said would have to be answered in order for unification to occur.¹⁸

In other words, while Gorbachev was willing to concede that Germany had the right to self-determination, he continued to stress the need to take into consideration certain "realities," particularly the existence of the two German states, the territorial status quo and the alliance obligations of both German states. He was ready to accept internal change within the GDR as long as the GDR remained a member of the Warsaw Pact and the basic structure of the postwar security order was not destabilized. In short, a "Polish East Germany" was acceptable, but not a fundamental and potentially destabilizing change in the postwar borders.

Phase Three: Acquiescence to Unification (January 1990-September 12, 1990)

Soviet opposition to unification had been based on the premise that the GDR could continue to exist as an independent state. By January 1990, however, it was becoming increasingly clear that the GDR was on the verge of collapse. Hence, Moscow was reluctantly forced to shift its policy. During a meeting with East German Prime Minister Hans Modrow at the end of January, Gorbachev agreed in principle to unification.¹⁹ A few weeks later during a meeting with Chancellor Kohl, he formally gave the green light for unification.²⁰

Gorbachev's agreement in principle to unification introduced a new phase in Soviet policy. Thereafter the main thrust of Soviet policy was aimed at preventing the membership of a united Germany in NATO and postponing unification as long as possible. During the next several months the Soviet Union put forward a variety of schemes designed to forestall or prevent the integration of a united Germany in NATO: neutrality, a continuation of four-

15 See his speech to the Central Committee plenum, *Pravda*, December 9, 1989. The same points were reiterated in even stronger terms in a letter from Gorbachev to Kohl on December 18. See Teltschik, 329 *Tage*, p. 85. For a comprehensive discussion of Soviet policy during this critical period, see Oldenburg, "Sowjetische Deutschland-politik nach der October-Revolution." Also Gerhard Wettig, "Stadien der sowjetischen Deutschland-Politik," *Deutschland Archiv* (July 1990), pp. 1070-78.

16 For the text of Kohl's 10-point plan, see *Bulletin*, No. 134 (November 29, 1989), pp. 1145-48. According to Teltschik, at this point Kohl thought it would be 5-10 years before Germany could be united. See 329 *Tage*, p. 52. For the Soviet reaction, see Oldenburg, "Sowjetische Deutschland politik nach der October-Revolution in der DDR," pp. 75-76.

17 *Pravda*, December 3, 1989. See Teltschik, 329 *Tage*, p. 68.

18 For Shevardnadze's speech, see *Pravda*, December 20, 1989. See also "Shevardnadze nennt Bedingungen für Wiedervereinigung," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, December 20, 1989. Also Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom*, pp. 135-36.

19 See Mark Nicholson, "Gorbachev Agrees to Principle of German Unification," *Financial Times*, January 31, 1990; also "Gorbatschow hat 'grundsätzlich' nichts gegen eine Vereinigung der beiden deutschen Staaten," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, January 31, 1990.

20 Craig A. Whitney, "Kohl Says Moscow Agrees Unity Issue Is Up to the Germans," *New York Times*, February 11, 1991. For a detailed discussion of the historic meeting, see Teltschik, 329 *Tage*, pp. 135-44.

power rights for an extended duration after unification, the integration of Germany into both alliances, a pan-European security system based on the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), and finally a "French" solution in which Germany would be a member of the alliance but not of its military command.²¹

The variety of proposals put forward by Moscow is a further indication that Gorbachev had no clear strategy for dealing with the German problem. During this period his policy was driven by events that he had helped to unleash but was powerless to control. Shevardnadze summed up the basic problem best in his memoirs: "The restoration of German unity had its own dynamics, which kept pushing up the negotiating timetable, overtaking it, and forcing it to go faster."²² As a result, Soviet policy had an ad hoc, improvised character.

Gorbachev's resistance to accepting the membership of a united Germany in NATO was primarily conditioned by security considerations: German membership in NATO would represent a fundamental shift in the balance of power in Moscow's disfavor. Domestic factors, however, also played an important role in shaping Soviet policy. Gorbachev faced a critical Party Congress in July 1990. In the months preceding the Congress, Gorbachev met with mounting criticism of his policies on a variety of fronts. In particular, he was accused of having "lost" Eastern Europe.²³ Concern was also expressed about a "new German danger." At the CPSU plenum in February, Yegor Ligachev, the number two official in the Politburo, pointed to the dangers posed by a powerful Germany, warning that "it would be unforgivably shortsighted and mistaken not to see that a Germany with vast economic and military potential has begun to loom on the world horizon."²⁴

Ligachev's views were echoed by other conservatives who warned of the dangers of "Pan Germanism."²⁵ With a tough Congress approaching,

Gorbachev could not afford to give his domestic critics more ammunition to use against him. He thus continued to stonewall on the German issue. However, once the Congress was over and Ligachev and the conservative challenge to his leadership had been defeated, Gorbachev quickly turned to the German issue.

The critical breakthrough on the German issue came during the discussions between Kohl and Gorbachev in Zheleznovodsk (July 15-16). At the end of the talks Gorbachev gave his blessing to Germany's full membership in NATO. In return Kohl agreed to:

- reduce the strength of the German army to 370,000;
- provide financial assistance for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the GDR;
- renounce the product of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons;
- not allow the stationing of nuclear weapons or foreign troops in the GDR as long as Soviet troops were on East German soil.²⁶

Gorbachev's sudden about-face at Zheleznovodsk caught the Germans, as well as many of his own advisors, by surprise. What precipitated such a sudden change in Soviet policy? Several factors appear to have played a role. First, the defeat of Ligachev and the conservative opposition at the 28th Party Congress freed Gorbachev's hand domestically. With the opposition defeated, Gorbachev was now in a position to make concessions that he had felt unable to make prior to the Congress.

Second, the communiqué at the NATO summit in London (July 5-6) indicated that NATO was embarking upon a far-reaching transformation, including a shift in nuclear strategy.²⁷ This strengthened Gorbachev's argument that Germany's unification would contribute to a reduction of the military threat to the Soviet Union. Indeed,

21 For a detailed discussion of the various shifts, see Suzanne Crow, "The Changing Soviet View on German Unification," *Radio Liberty, Report on the USSR* (August 3, 1990), pp. 1-4.

22 *The Future Belongs to Freedom*, p. 137.

23 For a detailed discussion of the debate on Eastern Europe, see F. Stephen Larrabee, "Retreat from Empire: The Gorbachev Revolution in Eastern Europe and Its Consequences" (Santa Monica: RAND, forthcoming). Also Suzanne Crow, "Who Lost Eastern Europe," *Report on the USSR* (April 12, 1991), pp. 1-5.

24 *Pravda*, February 7, 1990.

25 See Alexander Rahr, "Conservative Opposition to German Unification," *Report on the USSR* (May 11, 1990).

26 Kohl's willingness to agree to the denuclearization of the GDR appears to have been a unilateral decision that was not agreed upon in advance with Bonn's Western allies and caused irritation in some Western capitals. See Jim Hoagland, "The Bonn-Moscow Connection," *Washington Post*, July 19, 1990.

27 For the text of the London Declaration see "NATO Transformed: The London Declaration," *Selected Document No. 38*, United States Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, July 7, 1990.

according to Shevardnadze, without the changes in NATO strategy contained in the London communiqué, German membership in NATO would not have been acceptable to the USSR.²⁸

Third, West Germany's pledge to reduce the size of its army to 370,000 men also played an important role. A significant reduction in the size of the Bundeswehr had been one of Moscow's primary objectives in the Two Plus Four talks.²⁹ A reduction to 370,000 men represented a cut of nearly 45 percent in the combined size of West and East German forces. This significantly reduced the military threat posed by the Bundeswehr and was an important sign that Bonn was willing to make a concrete contribution to East-West detente.

Fourth, Bonn's agreement to provide a three billion dollar credit in June provided a strong incentive to agree to unification. The credit was not tied to any specific projects, and the interest rate on the credit was below commercial rates.³⁰ In addition, Bonn agreed to provide financial assistance for the withdrawal of Soviet troops, especially the construction of housing for the returning troops. In short, in return for Moscow's assent to unification, Bonn was willing to underwrite the costs of the withdrawal of Soviet troops and provide assistance needed to bolster Gorbachev's policy of perestroika.

Finally, time was not on Moscow's side. With the announcement of economic and currency union between the FRG and GDR in July, unification was rapidly becoming a *fait accompli*. The longer the Soviet troops stayed in East Germany, the greater was the chance that they would become the focus of popular resentment and hostility. Moreover, continued delay could have jeopardized the conclusion of a CFE agreement, which was scheduled to be formally signed at the CSCE summit in Paris on November 19. Without a completed CFE agreement, the summit would have to be postponed and Moscow would have to take the blame for the delay.

The Final Settlement

The agreement at Zheleznovodsk paved the way for the rapid conclusion of the Two Plus Four talks and the signing of Final Settlement regulating the external aspects of German unification on September 12. The Two Plus Four Agreement returned to Germany full sovereignty and lifted the Four Power rights for Germany and Berlin. At the same time, the Soviet Union agreed to withdraw its troops from the GDR by the end of 1994.³¹

In addition, on September 13 West Germany and the USSR signed a separate Treaty of Good-Neighborhood, Partnership and Cooperation, designed to expand and update the Renunciation of Force Agreement signed by the two countries in August 1970.³² Like the 1970 treaty, the new agreement emphasized that the two sides would refrain from using force to resolve their differences. However, it went considerably further than the 1970 treaty and contained a controversial nonaggression pledge (article 3).

As part of the overall settlement of German unification, Bonn also agreed to provide a 12 billion DM (about \$8 billion) package to help underwrite the cost of the housing and withdrawal of the 380,000 Soviet troops stationed in East Germany. This package also included a 3 billion DM interest-free credit to aid the ailing Soviet economy noted earlier.

The signing of the Two Plus Four Agreement and the German-Soviet bilateral treaty closed an important period in German-Soviet relations and East-West relations generally. In effect, the agreement marked the end of the Cold War in Europe. The division of Germany had been the cornerstone of the division of Europe. As many West German officials had for years emphasized, it was impossible to overcome the division of Europe without overcoming the division of Germany: the two were intimately linked. Thus, it was inevitable that the revolutionary changes in Eastern Europe would eventually have an impact on the German question

28 See Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom*, p. 145. See also the interview with Valentin Falin, Head of the International Department of the CPSU Central Committee and former ambassador to West Germany, *Der Stern*, October 31, 1990. In the interview Falin claims that the London Declaration was "the decisive factor" that persuaded Gorbachev to accept the membership of a united Germany in NATO.

29 See Serge Schmemmann, "Shevardnadze Seeks Curb on Forces in New Germany," *New York Times*, June 23, 1990. Originally the Soviets wanted a reduction to 250,000 men but eventually they agreed to settle for 370,000.

30 Ferdinand Protzman, "Bonn to Aid Kremlin Reforms with \$3 Billion Bank Credit," *New York Times*, June 23, 1990.

31 For the text of the treaty, see *Bulletin*, No. 109 (September 14, 1990), pp. 1153-56. For a detailed discussion of the various provisions, see Fred Oldenburg, "Sowjetische Europa-Politik und die Lösung der deutschen Frage," *Osteuropa* (August 1991), pp. 751-73.

32 For the text of the treaty, see *Bulletin*, No. 133 (November 15, 1990), pp. 1379-82.

and require a reassessment of Soviet policy toward Germany.

As always, however, timing is important. The West German and U.S. determination to proceed rapidly with unification proved to be politically very important. Had the West and the Kohl government not pressed ahead with rapid unification as they did, unification might have been significantly delayed and would have been far more difficult to achieve. In the late fall of 1990, Gorbachev came under strong pressure from conservative forces in the Soviet leadership, especially the military and Party apparat, to adopt a more conservative policy, both internally and externally.³³

If the West had not urged a rapid settlement of the external aspects of German unification, the Two Plus Four negotiations could have gotten caught up in the Soviet internal debate and it would have been much more difficult to bring them to a rapid and successful conclusion. However, by the time the hardening of Soviet policy began to occur, the Two Plus Four agreement had already been concluded.

The ratification of the treaties proved to be far less contentious than many observers expected. Some conservatives in the Supreme Soviet, led by the "black Colonels" Viktor Alksnis and Nikolay Petrushenko, tried to block ratification and force a significant revision of the agreements, but this effort failed.³⁴ The two agreements, together with the economic cooperation accord, were approved by the Supreme Soviet by a wide margin on March 4, 1991. In addition, the two remaining agreements on the stationing and withdrawal of Soviet troops were approved in principle and ratified several weeks later.³⁵

Bonn and Moscow In a New Era

The unification of Germany has significantly changed the dynamics and nature of Moscow's relations with Bonn. As a result of unification, Bonn's influence and room for maneuver have visibly increased, while Moscow's have declined. As long as Germany was divided, Moscow had an informal,

droit de regard over West German policy and Bonn had to be sensitive to Soviet interests. With German unification, Moscow lost its ability to manipulate the German question and has been deprived of one of its prime sources of leverage over German policy.

The disintegration of the USSR as an integral state has further shifted the balance of power in Bonn's favor. Russia will remain a formidable military power, but its economic weakness will make it difficult for Moscow to use this power to pose a substantial threat to Europe in the near future, even if Yeltsin is overthrown and there is a return of authoritarian rule. For the next decade or so Russia is likely to turn inward and be preoccupied with its own internal problems. Its main foreign policy efforts will be directed at trying to stabilize relations with the surrounding former republics, especially Ukraine.

Given its geographic position on the edge of the former Soviet empire, however, Germany will maintain a strong interest in stability in the former USSR. Any large-scale unrest in the former USSR would have important implications for Germany. Hence, Chancellor Kohl has taken the lead in trying to work out a stabilization and aid package at the G-7 summit in Munich in July 1992. The package is expected to include coordinated technical assistance, as well as humanitarian assistance and a rubble stabilization fund.

Germany is currently the largest single source of Western assistance to the former Soviet Union.³⁶ However, there are distinct limitations to Bonn's ability to underwrite Russia's transformation. The FRG's main priority in the next decade will be the reconstruction of the Länder of the former GDR. This task will absorb the lion's share of Bonn's resources, limiting the amount of assistance available to Russia and the other republics of the former USSR.

Moreover, Russia's economic difficulties are likely to limit the enthusiasm of German business to invest heavily in Russia in the near term. Bilateral trade has plummeted in the last few years. In addition, due to its economic difficulties, Russia has had trouble paying its debts to Germany. This has had

33 Among the most important signs on the shift of the right were the resignation of Shevardnadze, the intensification of the debate over "who lost Eastern Europe," the effort by the General Staff to evade the CFE treaty, stagnation in the START negotiations, the refusal of the Soviet Union to agree to withdraw its troops from Poland, and the crackdown in the Baltics. For a detailed discussion, see Stephen Foye, "The Case for a Coup: Gorbachev or the Generals," *Report on the USSR* (January 11, 1991), pp. 1-5.

34 See Petrushenko's criticisms of the German treaties in *Veteran*, No. 10 (March 1991) and his interview in *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, March 2, 1992.

35 For details, see "Deutsch-sowjetische Verträge gebilligt," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 5, 1991.

36 Germany currently provides 56 percent of all Western aid to the former USSR. See Chancellor Kohl's Tanner Lecture at the University of California, Berkeley, *Press Release*, Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany, September 13, 1991, p. 11.

a further dampening effect on trade and prompted the Kohl government to toughen the criteria for extending export credits to the former USSR in early 1992.³⁷ As a result, German trade with Russia and the former republics of the Soviet Union has come to a virtual standstill. Indeed, many German businessmen feel that the long-term trade prospects are better with Ukraine than with Russia.

Politically, the demise of Gorbachev has also had an impact on relations. Top German officials, especially Chancellor Kohl and former Foreign Minister Genscher, felt a special sense of gratitude to Gorbachev for the key role he played in facilitating German unification. Genscher, in particular, had been one of Gorbachev's strongest early supporters. They thus were anxious to assist Gorbachev's reform efforts. They feel far less of an obligation to Yeltsin. The changed atmosphere was readily evident during Yeltsin's visit to Bonn in November 1991, which lacked the drama of previous visits by Gorbachev. Kohl and Yeltsin signed a 14-point document, pledging cooperation in a number of areas, including arms control, scientific research and minority rights. However, the establishment of diplomatic relations was made conditional on the creation of a legally binding structure that would make provisions for assuming the Soviet Union's foreign debt. Moreover, the response of the German business community to Yeltsin's appeal for German investment was reserved.³⁸

The question of the German minority in Russia is also likely to become an increasingly important issue in bilateral relations. The Kohl government has faced a growing influx of ethnic Germans (Aussiedler) from Russia in recent years. In 1991, 147,450 Germans emigrated to Germany from the Soviet Union. This was one-third more than the number in 1989 and triple the number in 1988.³⁹ Moreover, recent estimates show that another 650,000 could emigrate over the next few years.⁴⁰

The large influx of ethnic Germans from the former USSR has added to Germany's mounting

refugee problem, causing several social tensions.⁴¹ Hence, Bonn has pressed the Yeltsin government to grant the two million strong German minority its own autonomous republic in the Volga area in the hopes of encouraging the minority to stay home rather than emigrate. In addition, Bonn has allocated nearly 200 million DM (\$130 million) for financial assistance for the construction of schools, hospitals, and cultural facilities.

During his visit to Bonn in November, Yeltsin promised to restore the Volga Republic disbanded by Stalin in 1941. In March 1992, after months of vacillation, he signed a decree establishing national regions for the German minority in the Saratov and Volgograd oblasts. In addition, on April 24th a formal agreement was signed between Bonn and Moscow reestablishing the Volga Republic by stages. Under the agreement the German minority is guaranteed the right to maintain their language, religion, and cultural identity.⁴²

The agreement to reestablish the Volga Republic removes an important stumbling block in bilateral relations. It remains to be seen, however, whether the agreement will stem the flow of German emigrants from the former USSR. Many members of the Russian minority feel that even with the establishment of their own republic, economic prospects are so bleak that they would be better off emigrating. Thus, many may still apply to emigrate unless the overall economic situation in Russia and other former republics improves significantly in the near future.

A final point worth noting is the impact of the August coup on Moscow's cadre of German specialists. In the wake of the coup many of the Soviet Union's top German specialists, such as Valentin Falin, Head of the International Department of the Central Committee and former ambassador to Bonn, Yuly Kvitsinsky, First Deputy Foreign Minister, and Nikolay Portugalov, a consultant to the Central Committee's International Department, were forced to retire. Together with a small handful

37 Ferdinand Protzmann, "Germany Curbs Trade Aid for Former Soviet States," *New York Times*, July 23, 1991. The curtailment of export credits has had a particularly serious impact on firms in the former GDR, which are highly dependent on the Soviet market, confronting many of them with imminent collapse.

38 Stephen Kinzer, "Yeltsin's Free Market Promises Leave His German Hosts Skeptical," *New York Times*, November 23, 1991; "Russlands Suche nach dem deutschen Partner," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, November 26, 1991; and Ewald König, "Mit Leeren Händen Zurück nach Moskau," *Die Presse*, November 23, 1991.

39 For a comprehensive discussion of German emigration from the Soviet Union, see Sidney Heitman, "Soviet Emigration 1990" (Cologne: Bericht des Bundesinstituts für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien, 1991).

40 "650,000 Russlanddeutsche denken an Ausreise," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, January 21, 1992.

41 For a detailed discussion, see F. Stephen Larrabee, "Down and Out in Warsaw and Budapest: Eastern Europe and East-West Migration," *International Security* (Spring 1992), pp. 5-33.

42 "Abkommen über Wiederrichtung der Wolga-republik," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 24, 1992.

of other Soviet officials, these men dominated Soviet German policy for the last twenty-five years, and it will be some time before Russia can develop a cadre of highly knowledgeable German specialists to replace them. Thus, in the coming years Russian leaders may not have access to the type of authoritative expert advice on German affairs that they may need to develop a coherent long-term policy.

In short, relations between Bonn and Moscow have entered a period of restructuring and transition as both countries grapple with the consequences of the end of the Cold War. In the coming decade Russia will primarily be preoccupied with its internal problems. This will limit its diplomatic engagement and influence on the European scene. At the same time, Germany is likely to devote primary attention to rebuilding the former GDR and

European integration. Both tasks, however, could be adversely affected by chaos in Russia and the former USSR. Thus, whatever Bonn's priorities, German leaders will still need to pay heed to Bismarck's famous dictum—"always keep a line open to Russia."

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